N° 89. SATURDAY, October 14, 1786.

To the AUTHOR of the LOUNGER.

SIR,

I Read with infinite ſatisfaction your 87th Number, on the Pleaſures of the Country, and the moral uſe of that "rural ſentiment," the effects of which you know ſo well how to paint. But thus it is that brilliant fiction ever delights us; while you were deſcribing in town, I was witneſſing in the country. I have juſt returned from an excurſion into a diſtant county, "a hundred miles from town, its inhabit-"ants, and its buſineſs." 'Twas at the houſe of Mr. L——, a relation and intimate acquaintance of mine, where I have been preſſingly invited theſe ſeveral years paſt, to ſpend a month or two of the autumn; to leave the thick air, and unwholeſome ſtreets, the buſtle, cares, and diſſipation of the town, for the pure breeze, the healthful walk, the quiet, the peacefulneſs, and ſobriety of the country. I had often heard of my friend L——'s charming place, his excellent houſe, his every thing, in ſhort, that great wealth

wealth (for he is a man of a very large eſtate) could beſtow, and taſte (for every body talked of his and Mrs. L——'s taſte) could adorn. I pictured his groves, his lawns, and his water-falls, with ſomewhat of that enthuſiaſm for country-ſcenery which you ſeem to feel; and I thought of his daughters (two elegant girls, whom I had juſt ſeen for a few minutes in their way from London) as the wood-nymphs of the ſcene. All this "rural ſentiment" I ſet out with; and the ſight of my friend's country-ſeat and beautiful grounds, which I reached on the third evening, did not belie it. How it has improved by my ſtay there, you ſhall judge by a ſhort ſketch of the country-life people lead at *L—— Hall*.

The party there, which my relation had told me was to be a ſelect one, and which made him doubly urgent in his deſire to have me there this autumn, conſiſted of an elderly Dowager of rank and fortune, and her two unmarried daughters; a member of parliament, and his brother, a clergyman from England; and two young officers of family, companions of Mr. L——'s eldeſt ſon, who has been about a year in the army. Theſe, with your humble ſervant, in addition to Mr. L——'s own family, made up the ſtanding eſtabliſhment of the houſe. There were beſides, every day, numerous occaſional

viſitors

visitors from the neighbourhood; Mr. L—— representing the county in parliament, and receiving the instructions of his constituents at this time of the year only.

The night of my arrival, I took the liberty of retiring before the rest of the company, being a good deal fatigued with my journey. Next morning, however, I got up betimes to enjoy the beauties of the season, and of the calm clear landscape around me. But when I would have gone out, I found the house-door locked. After various unsuccessful attempts to discover the retreat of the servants, I met a ragged little fellow, who told me he was boy to the porter's man, and the only creature beside myself stirring in the house; for that Mr. L——'s gentleman had given a supper to the servants who had lately arrived from town, and they had all sat up at cards till five in the morning. By the interest of this young friend, I at last procured the key, and was let out. I strolled the way of the stable, of which I found the entry much easier than the exit from the house, the door being left very conveniently open. The horses from town had not been quite so well entertained as the servants; for they were standing with empty mangers, and the dirt of the day before hardened on their skins. But this was not much to be wondered at, as a pack of

cards

cards certainly affords a much pleaſanter occupation than a curry-comb.

Having rubbed down a favourite poney, which I had brought to the country for an occaſional ride, and locked the ſtable-door, I turned down a little path that led to the ſhrubbery; but I was afraid to enter any of the walks, as it was notified, by very legible inſcriptions, that there were men-traps and ſteel-guns, for the reception of intruders. I was forced therefore to reſtrict myſelf to a walk amidſt the duſt of the high-road till ten, when, on my return to the houſe, I found no leſs duſt within doors, and was obliged to take refuge in my bed-room till the breakfaſting parlour was put in order. By one of the ſervants, whom, from his ſurly look, I ſuppoſed to be a loſer of the preceding night, I was informed that breakfaſt for ſome of the company would be ready by eleven.

At eleven I found ſome of the company aſſembled accordingly. The Dowager did not appear, nor Mrs. L—— herſelf, but had chocolate in their different apartments: it ſeems they could not be made up, as one of the young Ladies expreſſed it, ſo early: Their daughters ſeemed to have been made up in haſte; for they came down in rumpled night-caps, and their hair in a brown paſte upon their ſhoulders. The young gentlemen joined us with the ſecond

tea-

tea-pot; their heads were in disorder too, but of a different kind; they had drank, as they told us, three bowls of gin-toddy after the rest of the company had gone to bed. The master of the house entered the room when breakfast was nearly over: he asked pardon of his brother Senator and the Clergyman for being so late; but he had been detained, he said, looking over his farm; for he is a great improver of the value as well as the beauty of his estate. "Did you ride or walk, Sir?" said I. Mr. L—— smiled. "I walked only to the easy "chair in my library; I always view my farm "upon paper: *Mr. Capability*, my governor in "these matters, drives through it in his phae-"ton, and lays down every thing so accurately, "that I have no occasion to go near it."

Breakfast ended about one. The young gentlemen talked of going out a-shooting; but the weather was such as to scare any but hardy sportsmen; so they agreed to play billiards and cards within doors, in which they were joined by all the senior gentlemen except myself. I proposed to betake myself to the library; but I found an unwillingness in our host to let me take down any of the books, which were so elegantly bound and gilt, and ranged in such beautiful order, that it seemed contrary to the etiquette of the house to remove any of them from

from the shelves; but there was a particular selection in the parlour, which the company was at liberty to peruse; it was made up of Hoyle's Games, the List of the Army, two Almanacks, the Royal Register, a file of the Morning Herald, Boswell's Tour, the Fashionable Magazine, the Trial of the Brighton Tailor, and an odd volume of the last Collection of Farces.

Mrs. L——, and her friend the Dowager, made their appearance about two. As I was neither of the billiard or the whist party, and had finished my studies in the parlour, they did me the honour to admit me of their *conversazione*. It consisted chiefly of a dissertation on some damask and chintz furniture Mrs. L—— had lately bespoke from the metropolis, and a dispute about the age of a *fulky* set of china she had bought last winter, at a sale of Lord *Squanderfield*'s. In one of the pauses of the debate, the day having cleared up beautifully, I ventured to ask the two Ladies, if they ever walked in the country. The Dowager said, she never walked on account of her corns; Mrs. L—— told me, she had not walked since she caught a sore throat in one of the cold evenings of the year 1782.

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the young Ladies, with half a score of packing-boxes, just received by a ship from London.

London. These changed the current of the discourse to the subject of dress, to caps, feathers, hats, and riding-habits. The military men now joined us, and made a very valuable addition to this board of inquiry, by their commentaries on walking boots, riding slippers, clubs, buckles, and buttons. We had, not long after, an opportunity of judging of the practice, as well as theory of those branches of the fine arts. Dinner was half cold, waiting for the Dowager's eldest daughter, and the Major. They had spent about two hours at their toilets: yet the hurry of the Major appeared, by his man having forgot to put in the false straps to his buckles; and of the young Lady, from one cheek being at least half a shade redder than the other. The Ladies went to tea at nine o'clock, and we joined them at eleven, after having discussed the prices of different sets of burghs at one end of the table, and the qualities of several race-horses and game-cocks at the other.

Such, Sir, is the detail of one day at the rural retirement of my friend Mr. L——, which may serve for the history of most of those I spent there. We had, however, our Sabbath-day's employment, and our Sabbath-day's guest, as well as your godmother. The first Sunday after my arrival being a rainy one, Mrs. L——,

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and moſt of our party accompanying her, went to the pariſh church. The Engliſh clergyman would not conſent to ſo wicked a thing as going to a Preſbyterian place of worſhip, and therefore ſtaid at home, to look over a party at picquet in the Dowager's dreſſing-room between her and his brother. I went with the church-going people for that one time, but ſhall never do ſo profane a thing again. The young folks nodded and laughed all the time of the ſervice, and during the ſermon drew back their chairs from the front of the gallery, eat nuts, and pelted the ſhells. The Major only was more ſeriouſly employed, in drawing caricatures of the congregation below, for which, it muſt be confeſſed, ſome of them afforded no unfavourable ſubjects.

The parſon of the pariſh, like your old Lady's, was always a Sunday-viſitor at L—— Hall. He had been tutor to the heir and his ſecond brother, and had the honour of inſpiring them both with a moſt ſovereign contempt and deteſtation of learning. He, too, like your godmother's clergyman, communicated information; to the ladies he related the little ſcandalous anecdotes of the pariſh, and gave his former pupils intelligence of ſeveral coveys of partridges. Himſelf afforded them game within doors, being what is commonly called a *Butt* to the unfledged

arrows

arrows of the young gentlemens wit. To their father he was extremely uſeful in drawing corks, and putting him in mind where the toaſt ſtood. In ſhort, he ſeemed a favourite with all the branches of the family. As to religion, it fared with that as with the literature he had been employed to inſtil into his pupils; he contrived to make all the houſe think it a very ridiculous thing.

About a fortnight after I went to L—— Hall, the arrival of an elderly Baronet from town, an old club-companion of Mr. L——'s, added one other rural idea to the ſtock we were already in poſſeſſion of; I mean that of eating, in which our new gueſt, *Sir William Harrico*, was a remarkable adept. Every morning at breakfaſt we had a diſſertation on dinner, the bill of fare being brought up for the reviſal of Sir William. He taught us a new way of dreſſing muſhrooms, overſaw the compoſition of the grouſe-ſoup in perſon, and gave the veniſon a reprieve to a certain diſtant day, when it ſhould acquire the exactly proper *fumet* for the palate of a connoiſſeur.

Such, Mr. Lounger, is the train of "rural "ſentiment" which I have cultivated during my autumn abode at L—— Hall. I think I might, without leaving town, have acquired the receipt for the muſhroom ragout, and have eat ſtinking veniſon there as eaſily as in the country.

try. I could have played cards or billiards at noon-day with as much ſatisfaction in a crowded ſtreet, as in view of Mr. L——'s woods and mountains. The warehouſe in *Prince*'s-*Street* might have afforded me information as to chintz and damaſk chair covers; and your ingenious correſpondent *Mr. Jenkin* could have ſhewn me a model of the neweſt-faſhioned buckle on the foot of ſome of his little ſcarlet beaux, or of a rouged cheek on one of the miniature Ladies of his window. In ſhort, I am inclined to believe, that folly, affectation, ignorance, and irreligion, might have been met with in town, notwithſtanding the labours of the *Lounger*; that I might have ſaved myſelf three days journey, the expence of a poſt-chaiſe, and a ſix weeks loſs of time; and, what was perhaps more material than all the reſt, I might have preſerved that happy enthuſiaſm for country-pleaſures which you ſeem ſtill to enjoy, and which, in the leſs-informed days of my youth, I alſo was fortunate enough to poſſeſs.

I am, &c.

URBANUS.

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